Ill-Motivated Dhrtarastra

From Krsna Book, Chapter 49 by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Srila Prabhupada

Narrator: (music) The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krsna wanted to re-establish His devotees, the noble Pandava brothers - Yudhisthira, Arjuna, Bhima, Nalkula and Sahadeva, as rulers in Hastinapura.

The history was that Drhtarastra had sat on the throne after the death of his brother because the Pandavas were still too young to rule. When the Pandavas were of age and came to Dhrtarastra, however, he arranged a Gambling Match in which they were insulted and cheated out of their kingdom, at least for some time. That time was now past but Krsna knew that Dhrtarastra was inclined to give the kingdom to his own sons, headed by Duryodhana. Krsna therefore ordered his uncle, the great devotee and respected statesman, Akrura, to visit Hastinapura and study how Dhrtarastra was dealing with the Pandavas.

The part of New Delhi, which is still known as Indraprastha, is accepted by people in general as the old capital of the Pandavas. The very name Hastinapura suggests that there were many *hastis*, or elephants. Because the Pandavas kept many elephants in the capital, it was called Hastinapura. Keeping elephants is a very expensive job; to keep many elephants, therefore, the kingdom must be very rich, and Hastinapura was full of elephants, horses, chariots and other opulences.

When Akrura reached Hastinapura, he saw that the capital was full of all kinds of opulence. The kings of Hastinapura were taken to be the ruling kings of the whole world. Their fame was widely spread throughout the entire kingdom, and their administration was conducted under the good counsel of learned brahmanas.

After seeing the very opulent capital city, Akrura met King Dhrtarastra. He also saw grandfather Bhisma sitting with him. After meeting them, he went to see Vidura and then Vidura’s sister, Kunti.

One after another, he saw the son of Somadatta, and the King of Bahlika, Dronacarya, Krpacarya, Karna and Duryodhana. He saw the five Pandava brothers and other friends and relatives living in the city. Akrura was known as the son of Gandi, so whomever he met was very pleased to receive him. He was offered a good seat at his receptions, and he inquired all about his relatives’ welfare and other activities.

Since he was deputed by Lord Krsna to visit Hastinapura, it is understood that he was very intelligent in studying a diplomatic situation. Dhrtarastra was unlawfully occupying the throne after the death of the King Pandu, despite the presence of Pandu’s sons. Akrura wanted to study the whole situation by remaining there.

He could understand very well that ill-motivated Dhrtarastra was much inclined in favor of his own sons. In fact, Dhrtarastra had already usurped the kingdom and was now instigating and planning to dispose of the five Pandava brothers.

Akrura knew also that all the sons of Dhrtarastra, headed by Duryodhana, were very crooked politicians. Dhrtarastra did not act in accordance with the good instruction given by elders such as Bhisma and Vidura, but he was being conducted by the ill instruction of Karna and Sakuni.. Akrura decided to stay in Hastinapura for a few months to study the whole political situation.

Gradually, Akrura learned from Kunti and Vidura that Dhrtarastra was very intolerant and envious of the five Pandava brothers because of their extraordinary learning in military science and their greatly developed bodily strength. The five Pandavas acted as true chivalrous heroes, exhibited all the good qualities of ksatriyas, and were very responsible princes, always thinking of the welfare of the citizens. (Kunti and Vidura enter.)

Akrura also learned that the envious Dhrtarastra, in consultation with his ill-advised son, had tried to kill the Pandavas by poisoning them.

Akrura happened to be one of the cousins of Kunti; therefore, after meeting him, she began to inquire about her paternal relatives. Thinking of her birthplace, she began to cry. She asked Akrura whether her father, mother, brothers, sisters and other friends at home were still remembering her. She especially inquired about Krsna and Balarama, her glorious nephews. She asked:

Kunti: Does Krsna, who is the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is very affectionate to His devotees, remember my sons? Does Balarama remember us?

Narrator: Inside herself, Kunti felt like a she-deer in the midst of tigers, and actually her position was like that. After the death of her husband, King Pandu, she was supposed to take care of the five Pandava children, but Dhrtarastra was always planning to kill them. She was certainly living as a poor innocent animal in the midst of several tigers. Being a devotee of Lord Krsna, she was always thinking of Him and expected that Krsna would come and save them from their dangerous position.

She inquired from Akrura whether Krsna proposed to come to advise the fatherless Pandavas how to get free of the intriguing policy of Dhrtarastra and his sons. By talking with Akrura about all these affairs, she felt herself helpless and began to exclaim:

Kunti: My dear Krsna, You are the supreme mystic, the Supersoul of the universe! You are the real well-wisher of the whole universe! My dear Govinda, at this time You are far away from me, yet I pray to surrender unto Your lotus feet!

At the present moment, I am very much grief stricken with my five fatherless sons! I can fully understand that but for Your lotus feet there is no shelter or protection! Your lotus feet can deliver all aggrieved souls because You are the Supreme Personality of Godhead. One can be safe from the clutches of repeated birth and death by Your mercy only!

My dear Krsna, You are the supreme pure one, the Supersoul and the master of all yogis. What can I say? I can simply offer my respectful obeisances unto You. Accept me as Your fully surrendered devotee."

Narrator: Although Krsna was not present before her, Kunti offered her prayers to Him as if she were in His presence face to face. This is possible for anyone following in the footsteps of Kunti.

Krsna does not have to be physically present everywhere. He is actually present everywhere by spiritual potency, and one simply has to surrender unto Him sincerely. When Kunti was offering her prayers very feelingly to Krsna, she could not check herself and began to cry loudly before Akrura.

Vidura was also present, and both Akrura and Vidura became very sympathetic to the mother of the Pandavas. They began to solace her by glorifying her sons:

Vidura: Please do not worry, Mother Kunti. Your sons Yudhisthira, Arjuna and Bhima are extraordinarily powerful! You should not be perturbed about them, since they were born of great demigods, Yamaraja, Indra and Vayu!

Narrator: Akrura decided to return and report on the extreme circumstances in which he found Kunti and her five sons. He first wanted to give good advice to Dhrtarastra, who was so favorably inclined toward his own son and unfavorably inclined toward the Pandavas. (Dhrtarastra enters.)

When Kunti and Dhrtarastra were sitting among friends and relatives, Akrura began to address him, calling him "Vaicitravirya." Vaicitravirya means the son of Vicitravirya.

Vicitravirya was the name of the father of Dhrtarastra, but Dhrtarastra was not actually the begotten son of Vicitravirya. He was the begotten son of Vyasadeva.

Formerly, it was the system that if a man were unable to beget a child, his brother could beget a child in the womb of his wife. That system is now forbidden in this age of Kali. Akrura called Dhrtarastra "Vaicitravirya" sarcastically because he was not actually begotten by his father. He was the son of Vyasadeva. When a child was begotten in the wife by the husband's brother, the child was claimed by the husband, but of course the child was not begotten by the husband. This sarcastic remark pointed out that Dhrtarastra was falsely claiming the throne on hereditary grounds.

Actually the son of Pandu was the rightful king, and in the presence of Pandu's sons, the Pandavas, Dhrtarastra should not have occupied the throne.

Akrura: My dear son of Vicitravirya, you have unlawfully usurped the throne of the Pandavas. Anyway, somehow or other you are now on the throne. Therefore I beg to advise you to please rule the kingdom on moral and ethical principles. If you do so and try to teach your subjects in that way, then your name and fame will be perpetual.

Narrator: Akrura hinted that although Dhrtarastra was ill-treating his nephews, the Pandavas, they happened to be his subjects.

Akrura: Even if you treat them not as the owners of the throne, but as your subjects, you should impartially think of their welfare as though they were your own sons. But, if you do not follow this principle and act in just the opposite way, then you will be unpopular among your subjects, and in the next life you will have to live in a hellish condition. I therefore hope you will treat your sons and the sons of Pandu equally.

Narrator: Akrura hinted that if Dhrtarastra did not treat the Pandavas and his sons as equals, then surely there would be a fight between the two camps of cousins. Since the Pandavas' cause was just, they would come out victorious, and the sons of Dhrtarastra would be killed. This was a prophecy told by Akrura to Dhrtarastra.

Akrura: In this material world, no one can remain as an eternal companion to another. By chance only we assemble together in the family, in the society, in the community or in the nation, but at the end, because every one of us has to give up the body, we must be separated. One should not, therefore, be unnecessarily affectionate toward family members.

Narrator: Dhrtarastra's affection was also unlawful and did not show much intelligence. In plain words, Akrura hinted to Dhrtarastra that his staunch family affection was due to his gross ignorance of fact. Although we appear to be combined together in family, society or nation, each one of us has an individual destiny. Everyone takes birth according to individual past work; therefore everyone has to individually enjoy or suffer the result of his own karma. There is no possibility of improving one's destiny by cooperative living.

Sometimes it happens that one's father accumulates wealth by illegal ways, and the son takes away the money, although it is hard-earned by the father. It is just like a small fish in the ocean who eats the material body of the large, old fish. One ultimately cannot accumulate wealth illegally for the gratification of his family, society, community or nation.

That many great empires which developed in the past are no longer existing because their wealth was squandered away by later descendants is an illustration of this principle. One who does not know this subtle law of

fruitive activities and thus gives up the moral and ethical principles only carries with him the reactions of his sinful activities. His ill-gotten wealth and possessions are taken by someone else, and he goes to the darkest region of hellish life.

One should not, therefore, accumulate more wealth than is allotted to him by destiny; otherwise he will be factually blind to his own interest. Instead of fulfilling his self-interest, he will act in just the opposite way for his own downfall.

Akrura: My dear Dhrtarastra, I beg to advise you not to be blind about the fact of this material existence. Material conditional life, either in distress or in happiness, is to be accepted as a dream. One should try to bring his mind and senses under control and live very peacefully for spiritual advancement in Krsna consciousness.

Narrator: Except for persons who are in Krsna consciousness, everyone is always in a disturbed condition of mind and is full of anxiety. Even those who are trying for liberation, or merging into the Brahman effulgence, or the yogis who are trying to achieve perfection in mystic power, cannot have peace of mind. Pure devotees of Krsna have no demands to make of Krsna. They are simply satisfied with service to Him. Actual peace and mental tranquillity can be attained only in perfect Krsna consciousness.

After hearing moral instructions from Akrura, Dhrtarastra replied:

Dhrtarastra: My dear Akrura, you are very charitable in giving me good instructions, but unfortunately I cannot accept it. A person who is destined to die does not utilize the effect of nectar, although it may be administered to him.

I can understand that your instructions are very valuable. Unfortunately, they do not stay in my flickering mind, just as the glittering lightning in the sky does not stay fixed in a cloud. I can understand only that no one can stop the onward progress of the supreme will. I understand that the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Krsna, has appeared in the family of the Yadus in order to decrease the overburdened load of this earth.

Narrator: Dhrtarastra gave hints to Akrura that he had complete faith in Krsna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. At the same time, he was very much partial to his family members. In the very near future, Krsna would vanquish all the members of his family, and in a helpless condition, Dhrtarastra would take shelter of Krsna’s feet. In order to show His special favor to a devotee, Krsna usually takes away all the objects of his material affection. He thus forces the devotee to be materially helpless, with no alternative than to accept the lotus feet of Krsna. This actually happened to Dhrtarastra after the end of the Battle of Kuruksetra.

Dhrtarastra could realize two opposing factors acting before him. He could understand that Krsna was there to remove all the unnecessary

burdens of the world. His sons were an unnecessary burden, and so he expected that they would be killed.

At the same time, he could not rid himself of his unlawful affection for his sons. Understanding these two contradictory factors, he began to offer his respectful obeisances to the Supreme Personality of Godhead:

Dhrtarastra: The contradictory ways of material existence are very difficult to understand; they can only be taken as the inconceivable execution othe plan of the Supreme, who by His inconceivable energy creates this material world and enters into it and sets into action the three modes of nature. When everything is created, He enters into each and every living entity and into the smallest atom. No one can understand the incalculable plans of the Supreme Lord.

Narrator: After hearing this statement, Akrura could clearly understand that Dhrtarastra was not going to change his policy of discriminating against the Pandavas in favor of his sons. He at once took leave of his friends in Hastinapura and returned to his home in the kingdom of the Yadus. (Dhrtarastra and Akrura, Vidura and Kunti leave in opposite directions.)

After returning home, he vividly informed Lord Krsna and Balarama of the actual situation in Hastinapura and the intentions of Dhrtarastra. Akrura was sent to Hastinapura by Krsna to analyze the politics there. By the grace of the Lord, he was successful and informed Krsna about the actual situation.

Thus, all parties could understand that a war between the Kurus and the Pandavas was inevitable. It would be known as the Battle of Kurukshetra. (Bhajan)